



Veda Stringham Mackay had her picture taken near the top of Mount Timpanogos during her first climb, left. Seven more climbs and 50 years later, she attended a special ceremony at the top of the mountain near Aspen Grove.

Climbing Timpanogos in 1918 was a thrill that never faded

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By Kris Radish

Deseret News staff writer

PROVO CANYON — Veda Stringham Mackay was 16 years old the summer of 1912, and that July was quite a month for her.

Early one morning she hopped on the Provo Canyon train, loaded down with her bedroll, her Boy Scout boots, and a head spinning with adventure.

"We got off the train at Wildwood and threw our bedrolls into the back of a wagon that was hauling food up the mountain for us," said Mrs. Mackay. "There wasn't a road up there then, you know."

That was the exciting part for Mrs. Mackay and a bunch of friends who were going to spend the next two days climbing Mount Timpanogos.

They were the second group of climbers to participate in what was soon to become a yearly tradition, The Brigham Young University Timp Hike.

E. L. "Timpanogos" Roberts originated the hike a year before so students could enjoy the outdoors and also learn something about it.

"I remember it was all very exciting," said Mrs. Mackay. "We all slept on the ground that night, and the next morning we were awakened to the sound of trumpets playing, 'Holy City.'"

She said the trip to the top of the mountain was a hard one, and scouts would run back and forth to the hikers showing them the easiest way.

"We would stop every now and then for lectures on the flowers or something else," she said. "The top of the mountain was so beautiful it took your breath away."

Mrs. Mackay was able to make it to the top of the mountain seven more times and was one of about 100 people who attended a special ceremony recently to honor the founder of those famous hikes.

After sponsoring the hike since 1912, BYU discontinued sponsorship in 1972 because of the damage to the mountain's fragile terrain.

Historian Theron Luke, who spoke at the special ceremony held at the base of the mountain near Aspen Grove, said there was another reason for the end of the hike.

"Things just got out of hand and there was drinking and other things that violated the standards of BYU and the LDS Church," he said. "Roberts wouldn't have wanted to see that happening either."

Roberts was the creator and developer of the basic physical education organization at BYU and is called the university's first real coach.

Although several of his students were Olympians, he is still best remembered as the founder of the Timp Hike.

A plaque in his honor has been constructed at the base of the mountain on the trail that he laid out when the hikes first started.

Many of the people who attended the special program were like Mrs. Mackay, people who were lucky enough to know Roberts and experience the friendship and beauty of one of the Timp Hikes.

"We would sit around the campfire right here and sing songs and talk," said Israel Heaton, a former Timp Hiker. "It was a wonderful, wonderful experience that some of us have carried around all of our lives."

The Timp Hike is still an important part of many Utahns' lives as hundreds of people climb the mountain each year.

Things haven't changed much since Roberts fought his way through the bushes and over rock ledges to get to the summit of Mount Timpanogos.

The tall pines, waterfalls, Emerald Lake, glacier, lofty peaks and flower beds that Mrs.

Mackay sang about back in 1912 are still there waiting for other adventurers.